

**Remarks by Leslie A. Bassett,
Chargé d’Affaires, Embassy of the United States of America
Araw ng Kagitingan, Mt. Samat, Bata’an, April 9, 2010**

Like many here today I am the daughter and the granddaughter of veterans who fought to defend the values we cherish and the freedoms we love. So for me it is a special honor to stand before the surviving heroes of Bataan. It is an honor as well to stand in the presence of this memorial that ensures that all those who left their footprints in this soil are remembered, and revered, for all time.

You are the heroes of your generation – and of ours. We are all the sons and daughters of your sacrifices that brought about the end of the war and the restoration of freedom. Today, when we look at this memorial, we remember your suffering, and we vow to be brave as you are, to be strong as you are, and to be unwavering in our love of family, home and country as you are. The pages of history turn, but the lessons of history abide. What you have taught we will remember.

And the lessons of Bataan live. We stand before the most important memorial to your heroism, but not the only one. Every year across the United States communities gather, just as we are gathering here, to lower the flag, remember the surrender of Bataan, and what it signified. Every year in New Mexico thousands of people gather to re-live the march, to walk in the footsteps of those who survived, and to remember the footprints of those who fell. Bataan survivors greet those who make it at the finish line.

The spirit of Bataan is not about looking back – it is about always looking forward, and looking out for others. Some of the greatest lessons we learn from the marchers are tales of grace, of helping hands outstretched in even the most tragic of times. This lesson of our heroes of Bataan lives on too. In their honor the modern-day naval ship “USS Bataan” sails around the world offering the hand of friendship in tragic times. Most recently the captain and crew were in Haiti, aiding those devastated by earthquake. The help offered by the USS Bataan is a tribute to the men we salute here. Men who surrendered but never gave up. Men whose example we strive to live up to every day.

The sacrifice of our WWII veterans, and especially those of Bataan, made possible the world we are fortunate to live in now. From their suffering springs strength; from their brotherhood grows friendship; and from their lives we all draw inspiration.

The torch of remembrance burns brightly. The bell of history rings strong. And the memory of Bataan lives on in our hearts, forever.

Mabuhay nag Pilipinas! Maraming salamat.